CULTURAL ANIMAL STUDIES BAND 15

Martin Bartelmus / Maurice Saß (Hg.)

Wild-Tier-Fotografie

Ökologische, postkoloniale und ästhetische Perspektiven

1682 J.B. METZLER

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Feather War with the Camera Women, Bird Protection, and Hermann Hähnle's Films

Katerina Korola und Katharina Loew

At the turn of the twentieth century, the engineer, inventor, and film pioneer Hermann Hähnle (1897–1965) began filming rare and endangered birds in their natural habitats. Born in Baden-Württemberg to Hans Hähnle, a felt manufacturer, and Lina Hähnle (1851–1941), founder of the Bund für Vogelschutz (Association for the Protection of Birds), the young Hermann first encountered moving images at the Parisian Exposition Universelle in 1900. He returned home enthusiastic about the new technology and shortly thereafter began making his own films, inaugurating a decades-long career that prefigures the work of later wildlife filmmakers like Jacques Cousteau and David Attenborough. As one of the first to recognize the potential of cinema to promote the preservation of wildlife, Hähnle's career offers a unique opportunity to explore the emergence of wildlife cinematography alongside the development of Germany's nature conservation movement. What role did cinema play in the context of early twentieth-century campaigns for the preservation of endangered species and biotopes? How did filmmakers like Hähnle aim to activate their audiences for the conservationist cause? What relationship between the human and nonhuman world did Hähnle's films and the discourse of the Bund für Vogelschutz model and promote? And how did this relationship intersect with ongoing social debates, particularly those concerning the changing place of women as homemakers, workers, and consumers?

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Paying attention to the crucial and complex role of women in early conservation efforts, this essay begins by examining how the Bund für Vogelschutz's conservationist discourse responded to the rapidly changing social and environmental landscape of turn-of-the-century Germany. It then examines the way the aesthetic and technical innovations of Hähnle's films reflected an effort to rally public support for the protection of domestic and migratory birds. Finally, it explores how the cinematic image emerged as a form of preservation in and of itself, one that could safeguard 'living' images of the animal world in the apparently imminent event of its disappearance.

As we will argue, a key dimension of Hähnle's films consisted in the transposition of the concept of the *Natururkunde* (nature document), drawn from contemporary hunter-photographers like Carl G. Schillings, from still photography to moving pictures and from the colonies into the domestic context. By giving prominence to native songbirds, these films encouraged viewers to take an active role in animal protection, whether by participating in local conservation efforts or taking up the camera to document species threatened by human activity. At the same time, however, this transposition also brought the idea of the *Natururkunde* into close proximity with debates about the changing place of women in German society, which stood at the heart of one of the period's most prominent animal protection efforts—the campaign against the taxidermy bird hat and the 'feather war' (*Federkrieg*) it provoked.[1] Against this background, it becomes possible to excavate the gendered discourse that permeated Hähnle's films and the Bund für Vogelschutz's activities. Pitting one form of taxidermy (the cinema) against another (the bird hat), Hähnle's films presented bird conservation as a way for women to take an active role in society, while at the same time positioning their sartorial desires at the heart of the capitalist exploitation of nature.

1 Bird Conservation

To understand the role Hähnle's films played in promoting bird conservation, it is important to first take a closer look at the activities of the Bund für Vogelschutz. In particular, it is necessary to scrutinize how bird protection advocates envisioned the relationship of the human to the natural world in a time of massive social and ecological transformation. Founded in 1899, the Bund für Vogelschutz quickly became one of the largest conservation societies in Germany. It remained active until the 1990s, when it merged with the former Naturschutzbund der DDR (Nature Protection Association of the GDR) to form the present day Naturschutzbund Deutschland e. V. (Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union, NABU). In contrast to like-minded organizations like the Deutsche Verein zum Schutze der Vogelwelt (German Association for the Protection of Birdlife, 1875), which

[1] Hähnle 1903, p. 388–389.

took a more exclusive and scientific approach, Lina Hähnle aimed for the widest possible appeal. Known across Germany as the 'bird mother' (*Vogelmutter*), she deployed her family's wealth to keep dues at a nominal level. Membership did not presuppose any ornithological expertise, and the Bund's ventures emphasized education and hands-on activities. In particular, it lobbied local politicians, oversaw the purchase of land to create designated bird conservation areas (including the Federsee in Upper Swabia and the Island of Mellum in the North Sea), and sponsored educational campaigns that encouraged the installation of maintenance of nests, copses, and winter feeding sites for local birds. Modern visual media, including postcards, books and pamphlets, stereographic pictures, illustrated slide lectures, and, most prominently, film screenings, also came to play a key role in the Bund für Vogelschutz's efforts to nurture a sense of enthusiasm for the animal world amongst the wider public.

The Bund für Vogelschutz can be situated alongside a number of conservation societies that emerged across Germany in response to the dramatic changes that the environment had undergone since the late eighteenth century. These included not only the well-known phenomena of urbanization and industrialization, but also the transformation of local landscapes as a result of engineering projects such as the straightening of rivers, draining of marshes and moorlands, and the transition to monocultural agriculture. In addition to altering traditional landscapes, these large-scale transformations also had a severe impact on biodiversity across the country, especially in the wetland areas upon which many species of wild fowl depended.[2] By the end of the nineteenth century, the decline in biodiversity was such that it prompted some of the first sustained reflections on the impact of human activities on the natural environment, anticipating present day debates about the Anthropocene. Writing in 1883, for instance, Friedrich Engels commented:

> Damn little is left of the 'nature' of Germany at the time when the Germans immigrated. The surface of the earth, climate, vegetation, fauna, the people themselves have changed infinitely and everything through human activity, while the changes that occurred without human intervention in Germany's nature at this time are unpredictably small.[3]

Similar sentiments motivated the formation of a conservation societies like Naturfreunde (Friends of Nature, 1895), Verein zum Schutze und zur Pflege der Alpenpflanzen (Association for the Protection and Care of Alpine Plants, 1900), and Bund Heimatschutz (Federation for Homeland Protection, 1904), which encouraged individuals to take an active role in counteracting the deleterious effects of modernization to preserve local landscapes and 'natural monuments' (*Naturdenkmäler*) for future generations.

[2] See Lekan 2004; Gudermann 2005; Blackbourn 2006.

[3] Marx and Engels 1962, p. 498–499.

Like other bird conservation organizations including the Austrian Bund der Vogelfreunde (Union of Bird Friends, 1896), which the Bund für Vogelschutz was modeled on, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (1889) in the United Kingdom and the Massachusetts Audubon Society (1896) in the United States, the Bund für Vogelschutz is noteworthy for the important role women played as members and organizers. Bridging scientific exploration and charitable commitment, bird protection allowed women to fill public spaces while adhering to conventional social norms.[4] Indeed, contemporaries deemed women perfectly suited to lead bird protection efforts, given that "when it comes to works of mercy, to protecting the weak, sighing creature, this is precisely the woman's place."[5] At the same time, however, women were also the target of the most prominent efforts of bird conservation societies, which aimed to put an end to the "mass murder of birds caused by the women."[6] Commercial fowling for the fashion industry had grown to such proportions by the end of the nineteenth century that it had brought many bird species close to extinction.[7] The practice of decorating women's hats and headpieces with feathers, wings, and at times entire taxidermy birds sparked an international outcry and became a key catalyst for bird protection efforts.

More than simply condemn the international feather and bird skin trade as such, bird protection campaigns focused on women's sartorial desires as the root cause of the rise in commercial fowling. The narratives that emerged in the context of these campaigns characterized women as ignorant and uncivilized on the one hand and rapacious and lethal predators on the other. The "wicked fashion" of bird hats was construed as evidence that women "as citizens of the state stand morally too far below men for their efforts to attain equal rights with men […] to compel respect."[8] A 1892 *Punch* caricature depicts a gentlewoman as a winged and clawed demon that is covered over and over in feathers as she stalks even tiny birds in the reeds.[9] Men, by contrast, served as obedient tools, like the hunting dogs depicted in an illustration by Gordon Ross from a 1911 issue of *Puck*, who stand at ready to gather the birds felled by the hunting gun of a woman—possibly Coco Chanel—pictured wearing an extravagantly-decorated feathered hat (Fig. 1).[10] Here, anxieties about the destructiveness of global capitalism blended with anxieties about female aggression, presumably a response to the growing women's suffrage movement.

The great egret became a key catalyst for the campaign against destructive bird fashion. Seeking to educate the public, the Bund für Vogelschutz sponsored

[4] See also Ahr 2013, p. 6–15.

[5] Floericke 1913, p. 114–118.

[6] Weltrich 1898, p. 313.

[7] See Wöbse 2004.

[8] Weltrich 1898, p. 313.

[9] Anonymous 1892, p. 231.

[10] Ross 1911.

Fig. 1 Gordon Ross, *The Woman Behind the Gun*, 1911, photomechanical print originally published in *Puck* (24 May 1911). (CC)

countless advertisements, pamphlets, and lectures, working in close collaboration with sympathetic organizations across international borders. The organization even commissioned the noted nature conservationist and photographer Carl G. Schillings to author a pamphlet titled *Die Tragödie des Paradiesvogels und des Edelreihers* (The Tragedy of the Bird of Paradise and the Great Egret, 1910), which decried the practice of hunting exotic birds, particularly in the German colonies of Samoa and New Guinea.[11] The case of the great egret was well suited to magnify the inhumanity of industrial-scale fowling. These birds were preferably hunted during the mating and breeding season, when their feathers were at their most magnificent. The overwhelming majority of egret plumes were obtained by shooting the birds as they nested, which inevitably resulted in their orphaned nestlings slowly starving to death. The plight of the baby egrets mobilized emotions for the environmental cause, prompting women to choose between perpetuating destruction in the name of fashion, or extending their role as caregivers to protect the natural world's most defenseless creatures.

Its vocal advocacy against exotic plume hunting notwithstanding, the Bund für Vogelschutz counted amongst the 'moderate' bird conservation societies insofar as it explicitly endorsed the use of feathers from 'huntable or farmed birds.' Indeed, the organization was not particularly Romantic in its approach to

[11] Schillings 1911.

nature conservation, aiming to preserve a 'nature' untouched by human hands. Rather, in keeping with prevalent lines of thinking at the time, it explicitly defined the value of birds and their habitats in relation to human activities. The organization thus favored the protection of native birds "useful for agriculture" and was quite comfortable articulating its arguments in economic terms.[12] Amongst the visual media that bird protection societies produced, one can find advertisements that encourage bird protection measures through mathematical equations demonstrating how many insects a single family of chickadees could kill over the course of a year, thereby increasing agricultural yields.[13] This economic language framed bird protection as a wise investment, reminding us that the very term 'ecology', coined by the biologist Ernst Haeckel in his *Generelle Morphologie der Organismen* (General Morphology of Organisms, 1866), shares its root with the word 'economy.' In this respect, it is telling that it was precisely to the metaphor of the 'household of nature' that Haeckel turned in order to explain his concept, defining the natural world as an extended household in which each living creature had its designated place and function.[14] More than simply expressing the interconnectedness and interdependence of the natural world, this metaphor allowed nature conservation societies like the Bund für Vogelschutz to articulate their projects in terms that persuasively corresponded to middle-class moral codes. Conservation, in this sense, became a matter of responsible stewardship that extended the virtues of household management to the natural world, and it was precisely this understanding of wildlife protection that Hähnle's films aimed to disseminate.

2 Birds on Film

An engineer in his father's felt factory and later founder-manager of an electric utility company, Hermann Hähnle pursued filmmaking, ornithology, and nature conservation as a past-time. Nonetheless, a unique combination of technical training, financial means, and social connections allowed him to become a pioneering figure in both the history of cinema and wildlife protection. Hähnle began making films in 1902. Of his considerable output only a fraction—approximately 800 films—survive. Initially working with a 35 mm Kine-Messter Camera (1899), which held just enough film stock for up to 90 seconds of recording time, he began to film wildlife—especially birds—in their natural habitat in support of his mother's conservation efforts.[15] An avid inventor, Hähnle experimented extensively color photography (including the Autochrome

[12] Hähnle 1903, p. 388–389.

[13] Mansfeld 1934.

[14] Haeckel 1866, p. 234.

[15] Hoffmann 2015, p. 52.

Lumière and Arthur Traube's Uvachrome processes), stereoscopy, and telephoto cinematography (*Fernlaufbilder*).[16] He reportedly held 250 patents for improvements ranging from steam technology to camera equipment.[17]

The first recorded public presentation of Hähnle's bird films occurred at a meeting of natural historians in Stuttgart in 1906.[18] At this meeting, Hähnle screened a series of shorts featuring robins, wrynecks, and snow finches, which represented some of the earliest moving pictures of animals to be filmed in the wild.[19] Unlike the zoo-pictures by film pioneers like Oskar Messter's *Junge Löwen im Zoologische Garten* (Young Lions in the Zoological Garden, 1897), Hähnle's films offered an unprecedented window into the lifeworlds of their subjects. Like his mother, Hähnle had a keen sense for public relations and his photographs and films were readily incorporated into the Bund für Vogelschutz's educational campaigns.[20] In close collaboration with professional and amateur nature cinematographers like Friedrich Michel, Hans Brehmer, Hugo Wolter, Georg E. F. Schulz, and Hubert Schonger, Hähnle helped to establish the 'nature film' (*Naturfilm*) as a key genre of educational cinema. The goal was not merely to convey facts about bird ethology, but also to awaken an emotional and sensory investment in the natural world. "A single good photograph is often capable of more than many words; it speaks a powerful, persuasive language," wrote protection advocate Paul F. Weckmann-Wittenburg, recalling Karl T. Liebe's insistence on the importance of aesthetics to awakening human compassion for the creatures of the natural world.[21]

Hähnle's films were not available commercially until 1923, when the Bund für Vogelschutz's films were confided to Naturfilm-Hubert-Schonger for theatrical distribution. Originally, Hähnle's films were above all intended as accompaniments to the hundreds of lectures that Hähnle and his mother delivered at schools, popular education venues, and club meetings each year, which reached considerable audiences. For instance, at an event at the Wilhelma-Theater in Stuttgart in 1911, Lina Hähnle lectured, while Hermann projected his films for a reported audience of 2,200 children.[22] The employment of the cinematograph for pedagogic ends closely aligns Hähnle with the contemporary cinema reform (*Kinoreform*) movement, which tirelessly campaigned against the sensationalism of commercial film and in favor of cinema as a wholesome educational tool. In

[16] Hähnle 1955; Weckmann-Wittenburg 1922, p. 4; Hähnle 1921a, p. 13. The first presentation of Hähnle's telephoto nature films took place at the Deutschen Photographischen Ausstellung in Stuttgart in 1920, winning the Bund für Vogelschutz a gold medal.

[17] Anonymous 1966, p. 59.

[18] Weckmann-Wittenburg 1922, p. 3.

[19] Ziegele 1959. See also Horak 2006, p. 459–475; Stutterheim 2005, p. 173–186.

[20] Weckmann-Wittenburg 1922, p. 3–4.

[21] Weckmann-Wittenburg 1922, p. 1; Liebe 1893, p. 132.

[22] Anonymous 1911, p. 10.

II.

Ein Lichtbilderabend für einen Vogelſchutzverein

1. Nibelungenmarſch von Weber.
2. Vortrag: Von der Tierphotographie.
3. Bilder aus dem Vogelleben:
   a) Einheimiſche Vögel im Neſt;
   b) Allerlei Vögel;
   c) Familie Langbein.
4. Zwei Lieder:
   a) Kein Hälmlein, von Fr. Bach.
   b) Der Frühling naht, von Mendelsſohn.

   Pauſe
5. Fantaſie: Zauberflöte, von J. B. Lingelée.
6. Zwei Lieder:
   a) Heinrich, der Vogelſteller, von Löwe;
   b) Der Vogelſteller aus der Zauberflöte, von Mozart.
7. Bilder aus dem Vogelleben:
   a) Seevögel in der Heimat;
   b) Wilde Vögel in fremden Landen;
   c) Straußen- und Taubenfarm.
8. Gavotte royale, von Czibulka.

Fig. 2 "Ein Lichtbilderabend für einen Vogelschutzverein," *Bild und Film* 3, no. 8 (May 1914), p. 199 . (CC)

May 1914, *Bild und Film*, the cinema reform movement's principal journal, printed a model program titled "a photographic evening (*Lichtbilderabend*) for a bird protection society," which reveals the extent to which cinema reformers saw Hähnle's activities as (potentially) exemplary (Fig. 2). The model program details a twenty-minute lecture on animal photography, followed by bird films alternating with folk songs and fowling-themed arias. Highlighting the compatibility of cinema reform and bird protection, the program offers dignified uplift for the middle classes through edifying educational content and refined entertainment.

The majority of Hähnle's films consisted of one or two shots with a running time of no more than a couple minutes. Characteristic of many Hähnle films is *Edelreiher in der Dobrudscha* (Great Egrets in Dobruja, 1918), a two-minute film shot in the wetlands near the Black Sea (Fig. 3). Likely intended to support the campaign against the feather trade, *Edelreiher* affords a peek through the reeds onto a group of egret nestlings. A quick cut marks the arrival of a parent with food. The excitement of the young birds is reflected in a sudden fluttering of wings that momentarily animates the frame before the mature bird again departs. This flurry

Fig. 3 Still frames from *Edelreiher in der Dobrudscha* (Dir. Hermann Hähnle, 1918). (© Landesfilmsammlung Baden-Württemberg/Haus des Dokumentarfilms, Stuttgart)

of movement represents the chief visual attraction of the film, which eschews any exoticism to present an intimate peak into the egret's family life.

Edelreiher was photographed by Karl Trautwein, one of the cameramen that Hähnle coached and sent abroad to photograph rare animals. By 1919, Hähnle was looking for "unemployed people of both sexes without prior knowledge" to instruct them in both natural history and the technical aspects of nature film production. Hähnle's openness to training women in the operation of motion picture equipment is in itself quite remarkable—camera operation being regarded as a male occupation in Germany—and underscores the standing of women within

the Bund für Vogelschutz.[23] What is more, several of his films showcase female collaborators as well as women in 'male' occupations during World War I, which at once recognize their contributions and exploit the novelty of seeing women in such roles.

The voyeuristic quality that characterizes *Edelreiher* is even more pronounced in a 1920 film featuring the peewit, a migratory bird whose eggs were considered an expensive delicacy in nineteenth-century Europe. Shot with a long telephoto lens, the film shows an adult peewit darting about the grass and a nestling hidden in the ground scape (Fig. 4). As the work of Richard and Cherry Kearton and Ottomar Anschütz demonstrate, wild birds had long been a popular photographic subject, and nesting birds in particular featured prominently in a number of sentimentalizing turn-of-the-century publications such as Arthur R. Dugmore's *Bird Homes* (1900), Francis H. Herrick's *Home Life of Wild Birds* (1901), and Oliver G. Pike's *Home Life in Bird-Land* (1905).[24] Nonetheless, capturing the small and fast-moving peewit on film represented a significant technical feat. The film's proximate view allows viewers to observe every detail of the peewit's breeding and nesting behavior firsthand and remains striking even today. By facilitating a face-to-face encounter with its small avian subjects, the film fosters feelings of compassion and familiarity in order to raise conservationist sentiments.

Presenting informational views that simultaneously seek to engage viewers emotionally in the cause of bird protection, Hähnle's films can be productively contrasted with better-known nature films of German silent cinema. Unlike the exotic and sublime vistas of the expedition films of Ufa-Kulturfilm director Martin Rikli and Austrian travel journalist Colin Ross or the mountain films of Arnold Fanck, Hähnle's films offer an intimate glance at the natural world.[25] Calm and sincere, they are concerned with quotidian activities of animal domesticity—mating, nesting, feeding their young. Seizing upon the household metaphors commonly employed by bird protection advocates, Hähnle's films characterize birds as models of domestic virtue and thus worthy of protection.

3 Natururkunden

Even as Hähnle's films sought to awaken sympathy for wild birds and thus commitment to their protection, as *Natururkunden*, they also offered an alternative model of preservation. The concept of the *Natururkunde* was popularized by the educator, photographer, and eventual filmmaker Georg E. F. Schulz in

[23] The contributions of women photographers and cinematographers to documenting wildlife in Europe and North America remains an understudied topic. For a notable exception, see Brower 2010, p. 54–58.

[24] See Kearton 1895; Anschütz 1887; Dugmore 1900; Herrick 1901; Pike 1905; for the history of early bird photography, see, for instance, the contribution of John Bevis in this volume.

[25] See, for instance, Waz 2005, p. 187–201; Schätz 2017, p. 104–109; Baer 2016.

Fig. 4 Still frames from *Kiebitz* (Dir. Hermann Hähnle, 1920). (© Landesfilmsammlung Baden-Württemberg/Haus des Dokumentarfilms, Stuttgart)

a photobook series of that name from the late aughts, the first of which featured nesting birds similar to those found in Hähnle's films.[26] Schulz, who like Hähnle was a passionate bird conservationist, defined *Natururkunden* as unmanipulated pictures, "reproduced without any retouching," of living creatures photographed in their natural habitats and initially conceived of his pictures as supplements to

[26] Anonymous 1880, p. 80. The term was already used in the nineteenth century to indicate the value of the photographic documentation of landscapes. See Simony 1889, p. 2.

classroom instruction in natural history.[27] Unlike conventional imagery of caged or stuffed animals, often isolated against blank backgrounds, *Natururkunden* offered insights into the ecological and ethological dimensions of animal life, reflecting the rising importance of ethology and behavioral ecology in the zoological sciences, a development notably fostered by the prominent ornithologists Oskar Heinroth, Magdalena Heinroth, and Konrad Lorenz.[28] These aspects were further emphasized by the texts that accompanied Schulz's images, which directed readers' attention to the key "biological moments" of avian life unfolding in their ecological milieu.[29]

One of the most prominent producers of photographic *Natururkunden* and lodestar to Schulz and Hähnle was Carl G. Schillings, who around the turn of the century undertook several expeditions to German East Africa (present-day Burundi, Rwanda, and Tanzania).[30] An avid big game hunter, photographer, and conservationist in equal measure, Schillings supplied large quantities of taxidermy mounts to German museums of natural history and live animals to zoos. He recounted his African adventures in his immensely popular book, *Mit Blitzlicht und Büchse* (With Flashlight and Rifle, 1905). Featuring over three hundred photographs, many of which were captured using then-novel nocturnal flash photography, Schillings's book represented a landmark in early wildlife photography. It went into eleven editions between 1905 and 1921 and was translated into multiple languages.[31]

The title of the book suggests a direct analogy between hunting and photography, anticipating Susan Sontag's famous claim that "guns have metamorphosed into cameras."[32] What is more, Schillings construes photography as a measure compensating for the rampant destruction of the natural environment. The first chapter of the book, dramatically titled "The Tragedy of Culture," advances a stark warning against the destructive effects of European civilization's expansion across the globe, from the extinction of peoples to the catastrophic exploitation of fauna for commerce. In response, Schillings postulates a double approach to conservation, namely,

> both the possible preservation of the still existing treasures as well as an early and intensive collection of specimens of individual species by expert hands for our places of public education, the museums! Today there is still time for many species, but in a few years it will be hopelessly too late![33]

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[27] Schulz 1908, p. 4.

[28] See Heinroth 1971; Burckhardt 2005; Schulze-Hagen, 2015, p. 9–18.

[29] Schulz 1908, p. 4.

[30] In an article from 1921, Hähnle attributed Schillings with the invention of the Natururkunde. See Hähnle 1921b, p. 78.

[31] For Schillings, see Becker 2008, and the contribution of Martin Bartelmus in this volume.

[32] Sontag 1973, p. 14.

[33] Schillings 1907, p. 14.

Photography thus acquired value not only as an educational tool, but as a preservation method that operated in tandem with conservation efforts, while simultaneously anticipating their failure. Arguing for a more scientific and regulated management of natural resources, Schillings understood photography as a supplement rather than alternative to the trapping of physical specimens. Photography was thus positioned in analogy to taxidermy mounts, which likewise answered the purpose of preserving endangered species for posterity.[34]

This collection-based approach to nature conservation exercised a palpable influence on Schulz's and Hähnle's work. It manifests, for instance, in Schulz's call for the creation of a vast *Bilder-Urkundenarchiv* (image document archive).[35] When state support for such an institution was not forthcoming, the Bund für Vogelschutz established its own collection, which by 1921 already consisted of around 6000 images.[36] In contrast to Schillings's interest in the colonial fauna, however, the Bund für Vogelschutz's collection pursued an domestic mission. It was conceived for the purpose of "collecting the best pictures from the plant and animal kingdom, from the living and dead nature of Germany."[37]

That Lina and Hermann Hähnle established this collection explicitly in honor of Schillings speaks not only to the latter's influence on their approach to modern media, but also points to the often overlooked importance of a colonial discourse of resource management to nature protection campaigns within Germany.[38] Moreover, as the numerous references to Schillings's photographs in Vogelschutz publications attest, the plight of animals from Germany's colonial holdings, from the elephants of Tanzania to the birds-of-paradise in Samoa and New Guinea, were an important factor in raising conservation sentiments within a domestic context as well. Hähnle himself was explicit on this point, locating the value in the Bund für Vogelschutz's collection of *Natururkunden* in the fact that it documented living creatures from the domestic environment that were as rare and endangered as "animals and plants from far-off places."[39]

Like Schillings, Hähnle employed photography and film to document "animals that are going extinct, whose disappearance is to be expected shortly."[40] By Hähnle's own account, the selection of subjects like the great egrets of the Dobruduscha, common ravens in the Alps, guillemots and ice auks in Helgoland, saber bills around the Hiddensee, and the sandwich terns that made their home on the island of Mellum corresponded to conscientious efforts on the part of the Bund

[34] See, for instance, Alvey 2007, p. 23–45; Haraway 1984/85.

[35] Schulz 1908, p. 5.

[36] Hähnle 1921a, p. 14.

[37] Hähnle 1921a, p. 14.

[38] See Gißibl 2016, p. 199–298. Schillings himself gestured to this connection in his book *Der Zauber des Elelescho* (The Magic of the Elelescho, 1906, here esp. p. 492–496).

[39] Hähnle 1921a, p. 14.

[40] Hähnle 1921a, p. 14.

für Vogelschutz to "make those recordings that will soon no longer be possible at all, so that no technology, no matter how sophisticated, will be able to produce a natural document (*Natururkunde*) of it."[41] This statement is striking not only for Hähnle's insistence on the preservative qualities of the photographic image, which prefigure the film theorist André Bazin's characterization of photography as a means of "embalm[ing] time," but also for its anticipation of a near future in which even the most advanced technology would no longer suffice to safeguard a natural world threatened by human activity.[42]

This pessimism in the words of one of the most impassioned animal protection advocates—whose organization, moreover, had already made great strides in establishing bird sanctuaries around the nation—points to a constitutive tension in the use of still and moving images in the service of nature conservation. One the one hand, photographic media were intended to foster an emotional investment in the natural world and aimed at enlisting audiences—especially women—to actively participate in the protection of the household of nature. On the other hand, the turn to photographic media also indexed a sense of fatalism, which is apparent in the rush to document, collect and thus immortalize in the face of a seemingly inevitable destruction, whose effects on local ecosystems was already becoming difficult to ignore.

4 Conclusion

Still and moving photographic images thus performed a twofold task for Hermann Hähnle and the Bund für Vogelschutz: They served as a crucial public relations tool as well as an archive in view of an extinction event in progress. The process of their creation is documented in *Dreharbeiten am Federsee* (Filming at Federsee, 1929), a film which once again brings into focus the complex gender politics that undergirded the early twentieth-century nature conservation movement (Fig. 5). Like many of Hähnle's bird films, *Dreharbeiten am Federsee* has a voyeuristic quality. Almost surreptitiously, the camera watches as two female assistants set up a hunting screen similar to those recommended by the Keartons for use in photographing birds, behind which they will mount their camera.[43] What is particularly striking about this film is the strange mixture of the modern and traditional in the way these women present and conduct themselves. Both wear their long hair neatly bound in a style that contrasts sharply with the Bubikopf craze then current amongst the 'New Women' of urban centers like Berlin. Yet the women also wear functional slacks, and without hesitation roll up their trousers

[41] Hähnle 1921a, p. 14.

[42] Bazin 2009, p. 8.

[43] For the use of hunting blinds in the history of wildlife photography, see the contribution of Anna-Katharina Wöbse in this volume.

Fig. 5 Still frames from *Dreharbeiten am Federsee* (Dir. Hermann Hähnle, 1929). (© Landesfilmsammlung Baden-Württemberg/Haus des Dokumentarfilms, Stuttgart)

and sleeves before the camera as they prepare to climb into the water. Although a certain degree of eroticism is certainly at work, the potential objectification of the two women is matched by their palpable demonstration of purpose, confidence, and fluency with complex equipment. Even as bird conservation discourse villainized modern women's sartorial desires, it also offered women the opportunity to take on new roles in public life, both as advocates of wildlife protection and participants in the production of images. In this sense, Hähnle's female assistants can be positioned in contrast to the decadent, feather-hungry women caricatured in bird protection campaigns. Rather than engaging in a 'feather war' in the name of vanity, these practical hunter-photographers set about the task of capturing *Natururkunden*, in which the animal world could, in theory at least, be preserved for future generations.

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